



PREVALENCE OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN URBAN AND RURAL SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

In past few years incidences of School violence has shocked the Indian schools also. Traditionally, it was considered as an “urban” problem and media reports and some researches in West have shown that violent behavior in schools is not restricted to urban settings but has entered in rural schools also. The present study aimed at finding the rate of prevalence of different types of violence such as student to student, teachers to student and student to teachers in urban and rural schools. For this data were collected from the students of urban (42) and rural (56) schools of Punjab state. It was found that rate of school violence was very high in both urban and rural schools. The details of various forms of violence have been given in this paper. In the end a few strategies have been suggested to prevent it.

KEYWORDS: Violence in rural schools, Urban schools, student to student violence, teachers to student violence, student to teacher violence.

INTRODUCTION

Children are sent to school not only to gain knowledge, but also to evolve as a complete human being. The values of non-violence, cooperation, tolerance and respect are learnt here and the same is ingrained in Article 29 of UN Convention on Rights of the Child which states that the “aim of education is 'preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin'”. But regular media reports on serious acts of violence in schools indicate that somewhere the aims of education are being undermined.

School violence denotes any behavior that violates a school's educational mission or climate of respect or jeopardizes the intent of the school to be free of aggression against persons or property, drugs, weapons, disruptions, and disorder. It is defined as “acts of physical or verbal altercation on the way to school, on the way home from school, or at a school sponsored event that can cause physical or psychological harm to another individual, school, or community (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). Hoang (2001) considered school violence as “unacceptable social behavior ranging from aggression to brutality that threatens or harms others, goes beyond highly publicized incidents of mass bloodshed to include acts, such as bullying, threats, and extortion.” Boxer et al. (2003) espouse that most of the people consider violence as a physical confrontation, but, in the school context (especially), verbal abuse can be just as damaging to the victims as physical violence is. Thus, school violence include a range of undesirable behaviors ranging from sporadic low-level aggressive acts, malicious insults, racial comments, regular bullying, corporal punishment, assaults, theft etc. to homicide. School violence wears many faces and may affect all in the schools. It may be directed towards students, teachers, other staff, and even property and perpetrator may include any of these. Usually violence in schools occurs between students, students and teachers, between teachers, parents and teachers etc.

Amongst students, bullying is the commonest form of violence. Researchers (Berger, 2007; Breakstone, Dreiblatt & Dreiblatt, 2009) categorized bullying in four types: physical bullying (e.g. pushing, kicking, damaging others' homework and damaging others' property), relational bullying (e.g. manipulating interpersonal relationships), verbal bullying (e.g. name-calling) and cyber bullying (e.g. spreading rumours online and sending malicious text messages). Similarly, teacher to student violence include a variety of behaviors of teachers towards students which either hurt them psychologically or cause physical pain such as traditional practices of corporal punishment, insulting or abusive language for them or other forms of cruel or degrading punishment, bullying and sexual harassment etc. Another form of violence that is being noticed now days is violence against teachers by students. In many studies conducted across globe, it has been found that teachers were being emotionally, physically, psychologically and in a few cases even sexually victimized by their students (Burton, 2008; Chen & Astor, 2009; Espelage et al., 2013; Mehmet, 2012)

Some forms of violence are natural and expected but the frequent incidences of violence create insecurity and fear that works against the purpose of the school. Every year more than 246 million children around the world suffer from one or other form of violence at school (Plan International, 2013) and in Asian region 7 out of 10 children are experiencing violence at school (Plan International, 2015). The rate of corporal punishment is also very high as reported in a survey conducted by World Health Organization (2003-2005) with 80% of schoolboys and 67% of schoolgirls had experienced corporal punishment in Egyptian schools;

95% boys and 92% girls in schools of Barbados and 97% students in (cited in Pinheiro, 2006, pp.117-118).

Fuchs, (2008) opined that children and juveniles raised in such environment which is characterized by deviant norms may adapt to violent habits and patterns of deviant behavior which adversely affect their social life. Besides, violence in school not only affects the victims but perpetrators also and on a whole decreases the effectiveness and relevance of education (Sugai & Horner, 2006) thus goes against the aim of the school. Earlier attention was given only to the high-level violence such as assaults, shootings and murder which received most media attention, but lower-level forms of violence such as bullying or usual corporal punishment have only in recent years started to be addressed by researchers, parents and guardians, and authority figures (Whitted & Dupper 2005).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Traditionally violence was treated as an urban phenomenon in developing countries. Several explanations have been forwarded in support of this assertion such as social polarization in urban areas, a higher density of population and segregation of housing areas leading to emergence of gangs as well as less family involvement in the student's daily activities, which leads to increased emancipation and the degree of their independence, a situation that may facilitate the emergence of conflict situations etc. (cited in Cristan, 2014, p.671). With change in time, there is evidence of rising incidences of violence in rural settings also. In case of schools also violent behavior is not restricted to urban settings (Dwyer, Osher & Hoffman, 2000). Therefore, it becomes imperative to find out the validity of these assertions in Indian schools so that the customized interventions may be planned to eliminate the school violence from all types of schools. Eisenbraun (2007) endorsed it “no school should be dismissed from the potential of violence based on its location”. Keeping these facts in mind, the present study aims to examine the prevalence of violence in rural and urban schools at three levels i.e. student to student, teacher to student and student to teacher violence.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey method was employed to conduct this study. The data was collected from 98 schools of Punjab state out of which 56 were located in rural area and 42 in the urban. From these schools, 2260 students of 8th/9th class were included in the study. Multi-stage random sampling technique was employed for selection of the sample. The data was collected from the students on 'School Violence Scale' constructed for the purpose.

FINDINGS

• Student to student violence in Urban and Rural Schools

With regards to student to student violence in urban and rural schools, it was found that peer victimization was very high in both rural (86%) and urban (89%) schools. Looking at the frequency of victimization, it is evident (figure 1) that in urban schools more students (31%) were victimized almost daily by their peers as compared to students in rural schools (22%). Considering the account of weekly victimization i.e. 2-3 times a week, it was found that 30% students in rural schools and 24% in urban schools reported it.

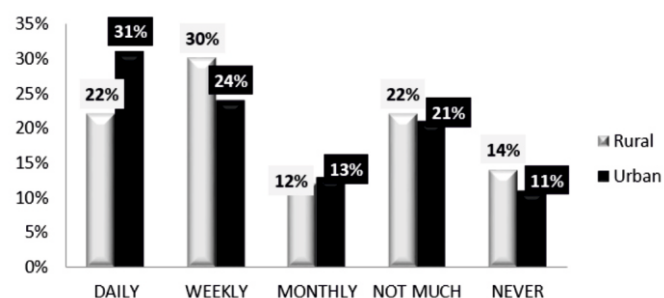


Figure 1: Total victims of student to student violence in urban and rural schools

On a whole, the rate of frequent peer victimization (i.e. at least 2-3 times a week) was found to be almost same in urban (55%) and rural schools (52%). About 34% students in urban as well as urban schools faced peer victimization less frequently. There were only 11% students in urban schools and a little higher i.e. 14% students in rural schools who reported that they were not victimized by their peer even for once in last twelve months.

As far as the forms of peer victimization are concerned again a little difference was found (figure 2).

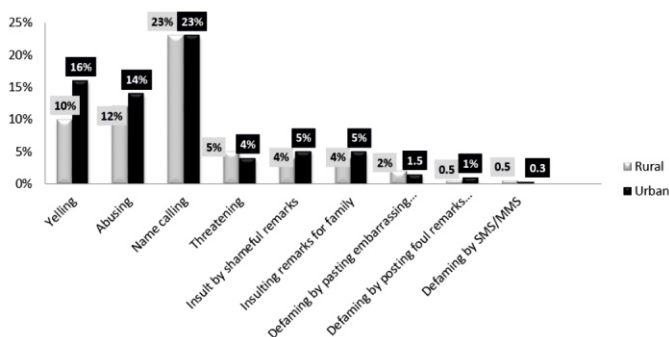


Figure 2: Difference in number of frequent victims of psychological violence (at least 1-2 times in a week) in rural and urban schools

As illustrated in figure 2, though victims of yelling and abusing was more in urban schools (16%, 14%) than rural (10%, 12%) but rate of other forms of psychological violence by peers was found to be almost same in urban and rural schools.

Further, as far as incidences of physical violence between students are concerned, again no major difference was found (figure 3).

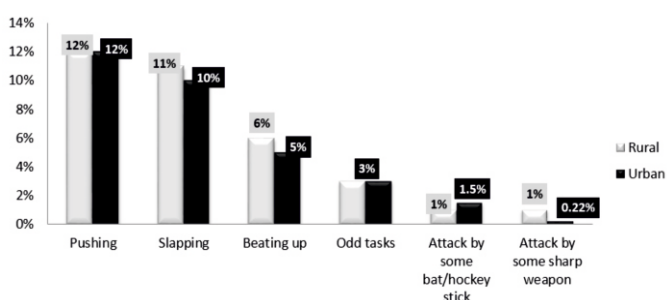


Figure 3: Frequent victims of student to student physical violence (at least 1-2 times in a week) in rural and urban schools

It is evident from the data given in figure 3 that cases of slapping, beating, attacks by sharp weapons were a little higher i.e. by approximately 1% in rural schools as compared to urban schools.

The findings are coherent with previous researches as Smokowski et al (2013) also cited that the prevalence rates of bullying in rural, urban, and suburban areas are equal. McCaskill (2013) also did not find any difference and reported that approximately 50% of students in both urban and rural schools were being bullied once or more during the current school term.

Teachers to Student Violence in Urban and Rural Schools

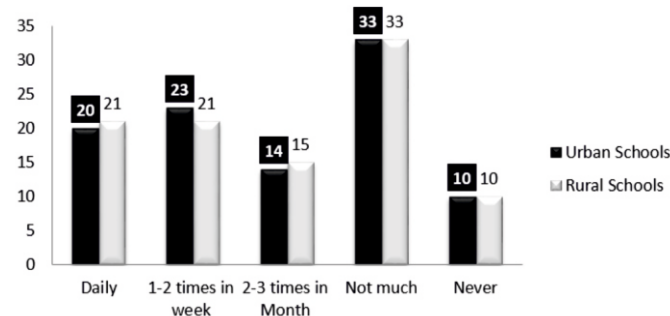


Figure 4: Percentage of total victims of teachers' violence towards students in urban and rural schools

It is evident from the data shown in figure 4 that 90% students in both urban and rural schools had faced the teachers' aggressive behavior. In urban schools, the frequent victims of teachers' violent behavior were 43% (20%+23%) and 42% in rural schools. Besides, 47% students in urban schools and 48% in rural schools also encountered the violent behavior of their teachers though occasionally. There were only 10% students in both types of schools who were never being punished or humiliated in any way by their teachers during last twelve months. From this data, it is clear that teachers' violence towards students in the form of corporal punishment or humiliation or any other form is quite prevalent in both rural and urban schools. It implies that locale of the schools did not matter in case of teachers' violence towards students.

Though the number of students did not vary, but there could be differences in the forms of punishment being used by teachers in rural and urban schools. Therefore, to look into this, the data of students from rural and urban schools was examined to find out the type of violent behaviors of teachers towards students (figures 5).

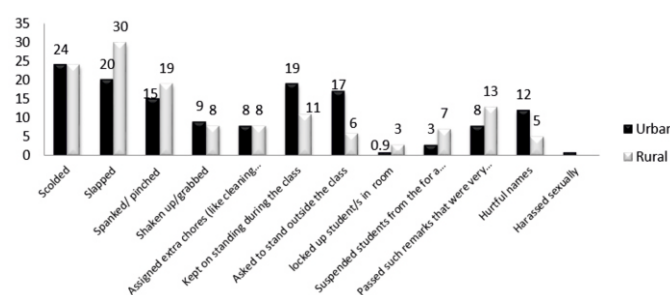


Figure 5: Percentage of frequent victims of teachers to student violence (punishments) in urban and rural schools

It is evident from the percentages of victims of teachers' violent behavior that the incidences of slapping, spanking, locking up, suspension and insults by teachers were at higher rate in rural schools than schools located in urban areas whereas in urban schools other forms of victimization such as keeping students stand inside or outside, calling them with hurtful names and sexual harassment was more prevalent than in rural schools.

The findings of this study in show some coherence with the research findings in other states of India. In a report on Corporal punishment of children in India (2015) it is mentioned in different parts of country around 40% to 99.9% school children were punished in schools. Pednekar (2017) cited that in Maharashtra, there were 60% students in rural areas who were slapped, forced to stand outside their homes, locked or had their ears pulled as punishment and 40% urban children faced these punishments. Nickerson and Spears, (2007) believed that the school personnel in rural areas and those having a greater percentage of poor students were more likely to use physical punishment.

With regards to corporal punishment, a number of reasons have been forwarded by researchers to explain its prevalence despite legal ban. One of these could be administrative and social acceptance as reported by Jain (2015) that parents approve it as disciplinary measures if it does not leave any physical mark on the child. Another argument for inflicting punishment is addressed by Moussa & Al Ayyesh, (2009) in Wasef, (2011) who opined that teachers are not qualified enough to discipline students by any means other than corporal punishment. Tao (2015) attributed it to overcrowded classrooms and lack of resources.

Student to Teacher Violence in Urban and Rural Schools

Besides, violence against teachers, in recent years, another type of violence has been observed Indian schools i.e. violence against teachers by students though such violence is of common occurrence in Western countries since two decades as reported in researches. To compare the incidences of student to teacher vio-

lence in rural and urban schools, the data obtained from the students was used and analyzed.

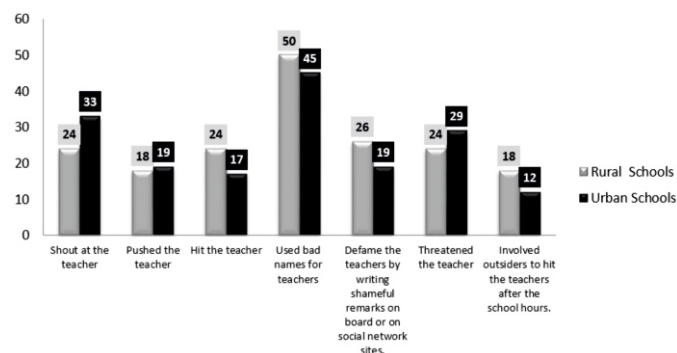


Figure 6: Frequency of incidences of students to teacher violence in urban and rural schools as reported by students

The data given in figure 6 illustrate that more students in urban schools than in rural schools had observed the incidents of student to teacher violence where students hit the teachers, used bad names for teachers, tried to defame the teachers by writing shameful remarks and attacked the teachers involving outsiders than in rural schools whereas in rural schools the incidents such as shouting at the teachers, pushing the teachers and threaten the teachers were reported more than the students in urban schools. Though the frequency of different types of student to teacher violence varies among rural and urban schools but the fact is in both types of schools the student to teacher violence take place.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the findings that irrespective of the school location (rural/urban), the rate of peer violence came to be very high (64% in rural and 68% in urban schools). Therefore, on a whole, it may be said that the traditional connotation that violence is an urban phenomenon do not stand right as status of student to student violence is almost same in urban and rural schools under study. These results show congruence with findings of Kingery et al (1996) who evidenced the growing violence problems in rural areas and Zghul who reported that the prevalence of violence is a major problem for both urban and rural schools (as cited in Obeidat, 1997).

There can be a number of reasons for increasing incidences of violence in schools especially the rural ones such as general unrest in the society itself, increasing intolerance among parents, teachers as well as young children and lack of non-violent conflict resolving techniques among them. Besides, these there could be a lot many other reasons which make school violence a multifaceted problem and call for multidimensional prevention programme such as renovating the school environment, changing teaching strategies, providing social skills training, including adults in school, and providing training and awareness for cultural sensitivity (as cited in Eisenbraun, 2007).

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